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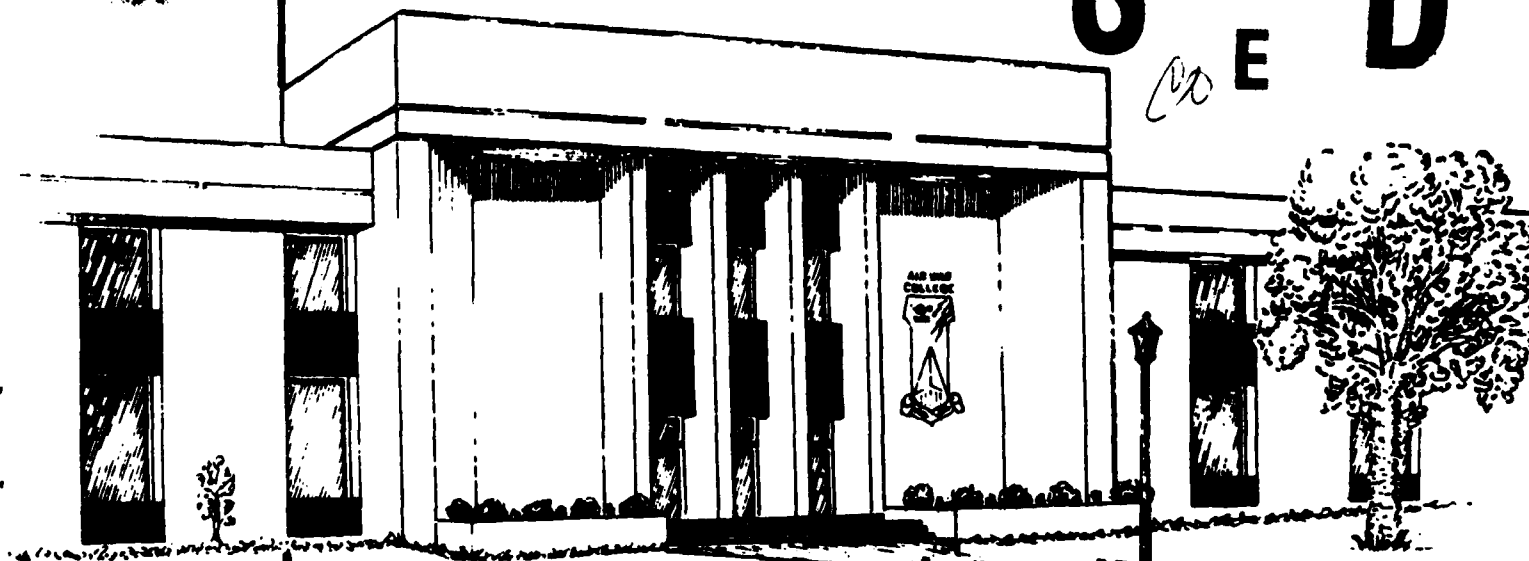
## RESEARCH REPORT

DO WE DEBRIEF SUCCESSFUL WARS THE  
SAME WAY WE DEBRIEF FAILURES?  
THE SIX-DAY WAR

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LIEUTENANT COLONEL RAANAN FALK

1989

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AIR UNIVERSITY  
UNITED STATES AIR FORCE  
MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, ALABAMA

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DO WE DEBRIEF SUCCESSFUL WARS THE SAME WAY  
WE DEBRIEF FAILURES?

THE SIX DAY WAR

by

Col Israel Krieger

Lt Col Raanan Falk

A DEFENSE ANALYTICAL STUDY SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY  
IN FULFILLMENT OF THE CURRICULUM  
REQUIREMENT

ADVISER: Lt Col Barry A. Levitz

MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE ALABAMA

MARCH 1989

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## AIR WAR COLLEGE DEFENSE ANALYTICAL STUDY ABSTRACT

Title: Do We Debrief Successful Wars the Same Way We Debrief Failures?

Authors: Israel Krieger, Colonel; Raanan Falk, Lieutenant Colonel, Israeli Air Force (IAF)

→ Debriefers tend to debrief failure in great detail. In wars, as in everyday training, failures are given much more attention; difficult questions are asked. Why? How? Is there another way? The debrief is not complete until the debriefer finds all the answers to all the questions. Are successes dealt with in the same manner?

The comparison between the Six Day War and the 1973 War is the perfect example to analyze. Both wars were fought by the same teams on the same court and, yet, the outcome was no doubt different. Checking lessons learned on both sides in both wars, one will most certainly conclude that the lessons of the failures were better learned and applied.

In 1973, Israel employed the same ground and aerial tactics that were so successful in 1967. An important question was never seriously asked. Were conditions in 1973 the same as they were in 1967? No. And neither was the outcome.

In 1967, Israel initiated a preemptive strike, and, a few hours later, the war was won. In 1973, Israel did not strike first, and her few active duty units were forced to face an overwhelming onslaught of attacking Arab armies.

It is imperative that senior debriefing officers comprehend the difference between debriefing successes and failures and the importance of both. (SDC)

#### BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Colonel Israel Krieger was born in Germany in 1947. He began his military career in 1964 after graduating from high school. Graduating from flying school in 1966, he participated in the Six Day War of 1967 as a young fighter pilot. He flew the French aircraft operated by the IAF at the time. Israel converted to the F-4 Phantom II in 1970, accumulating over 2,100 flying hours, many of which were combat missions in the Yom Kippur War. In 1976, he was promoted to the rank of lieutenant colonel and assumed command of an A-4 squadron. Two years later, he was assigned commander of an F-4 squadron. In 1985, he was promoted to the rank of colonel and in 1986 became a fighter wing commander. Israel was next assigned to the United States Air Force Air War College.

### BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Lieutenant Colonel Raanan (Rany) Falk was born in Israel in 1953. He began his military career in 1972 after he completed his high school studies and graduated in practical engineering. Rany joined the Air Force Academy and graduated in 1974. There began his career as a fighter pilot. He flew the A-4 and in 1976 converted to the F-4. In 1980, he converted to the F-16 at Hill Air Force Base, Utah, and from then on flew F-16's. Rany participated in the "1982 War" in Lebanon. In 1986, he was promoted to an F-16 squadron commander prior to coming to the Air War College.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
DISCLAIMER-ABSTAINER.....	ii
ABSTRACT.....	iii
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES.....	iv
PREFACE.....	1
THE ANALYSIS APPROACH.....	4
THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT.....	5
THE SIX DAY WAR.....	8
PRECEDING EVENTS.....	8
THE PREEMPTIVE AIR-STRIKE.....	12
THE SINAI CAMPAIGN.....	16
THE JORDAN-JERUSALEM CAMPAIGN.....	19
THE SYRIAN CAMPAIGN.....	21
THE SIX DAY WAR--POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES..	23
THE SIX DAY WAR--MILITARY CONSEQUENCES.....	27
THE YOM KIPPUR WAR.....	29
THE OUTCOME OF THE YOM KIPPUR WAR.....	33
THE ISRAELI STRATEGIC CONCEPT ON THE EVE OF THE YOM KIPPUR WAR.....	36
PARTICIPATION OF THE AIR FORCE.....	41
THE GROUND FORCES.....	48
PREEMPTIVE STRIKE.....	55
CONCLUSION.....	63
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	66

## PREFACE

"The only certain benefit that a military force can attain through its own defeat is the benefit of the lesson learned, assuming it is able to survive this defeat. The value of wartime lessons well-extracted and applied is in the higher probability to win the next war." (3: 123) Looking back into history, one can clearly see how lessons were learned and conclusions reached to affect wars.

In the Battle of Crecy (August 1346) the French changed from chainmail armor to a much heavier armor suit weighing approximately 60 pounds. Their lances, too, were longer and heavier and their horses were fitted with heavy protective armor. In doing so, the French sacrificed their maneuverability. Losing the battle, the French arrived at the wrong conclusions concerning the effectiveness of the British who beat them. What followed was a scorching defeat in the battles of Poitiers and Agincourt, with the French knights sinking into the mud and massacred without the possibility of retreat. (5: 62-63)

This exemplifies reaching the wrong conclusions due to an erroneous perception of the facts of the battlefield.

In the First World War, the defensive posture had the upperhand due to the mass production of barbed wire, machineguns and artillery. The Germans should have learned that before the war from the battlefields of Manchuria.



They could have dedicated fewer forces to defense in favor of offense, contrary to what Moltke eventually did. This is an example of failure to learn the lessons from the experience of others. (19: 22-24)

The tactics of the American 8th Air Force in its attacks on Germany in 1942-1943 resulted in unacceptably high losses from the German fighters, the worst being the attacks on Schweinfurt and Regensburg in Germany and Ploesti in Rumania. The Americans even returned to Schweinfurt a second time only to suffer a terrible blow. If these attacks were continued, the whole bomber fleet would have had to be renewed every three months. (19: 26)

All this was the outcome of a faulty doctrine based on the belief that a precisely flown formation of bombers would be able to generate enough firepower to defend itself from attacking fighters. As stated by Hansel in 1951: "Without doubt, this doctrine was based on wishful thinking rather than facts." (19: 27-28)

The more dominant question is whether the lesson could have been learned and the mistakes remedied following the first attempt. A more fundamental and comprehensive question from a historic aspect is whether a comparison between the "winning" and "losing" sides was ever attempted and if so were conclusions derived from this comparison. The more recent history, too, supplies us with numerous examples of win/lose situations giving ample opportunity to

analyze, draw conclusions and learn valuable lessons. Of special interest is the analysis of the winning element and whether success is given the same thorough debriefing as failure.

This work will analyze the Six Day War, as the successful war, compare it with the Yom Kippur War, as the unsuccessful one and, in doing so, attempt to answer this question.

## THE ANALYSIS APPROACH

The purpose of this work is to demonstrate how military endeavors resulting in defeat are much more thoroughly debriefed and studied as opposed to those resulting in victory. The study will also dwell upon the reasons and results of this "practice." The two conflicts chosen for this study, the Six Day War of 1967 and the Yom Kippur War of 1973, both extensively studied, provide ample proof of that phenomenon.

An understanding of the events and highlights of both wars is essential. Therefore, this work will open with a narrative of the Six Day War. An assessment of the political, economical and military outcome will then follow. The Yom Kippur War will be dealt with next, starting with a narrative of events and moving on to the outcome of the war. Having now covered both wars, the strategic concept that evolved after the Six Day War and carried Israel into the Yom Kippur War will be analyzed. A further specific analysis will scrutinize three individual elements, these being the support of the Air Force, the ground forces and the concept of preemptive strike.

Before submerging into the detailed course of events, an historical background of the Arab-Israeli conflict is given to place these events in the right context and perspective.

## THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT

The Arab-Israeli conflict is one of the most important and complicated ones in modern times. The armed struggle basically started in 1948 in the year that saw the creation of the State of Israel and almost immediately following thereafter by Arab attack. (This was the outcome after the declaration of Israel as a free state, but the violence had started in the 1930s.)

On the one hand, the United Nations called a ceasefire, and Israel was recognized as a free and independent state. On the other hand, the Arab countries all refused to recognize the State of Israel. Furthermore, these Arab states have persisted in the perverse assertions that they are in a permanent state of war with a nation they do not recognize. (13: 17)

Until 1967, there was no significant change or development in relation to the situation in the Middle East. Yet, at the beginning of that year, the situation was gradually changing. The Egyptian president, Abdel Nasser, repeated and reaffirmed the Egyptian and Arab intention to bring about the complete destruction of the State of Israel. Nevertheless, that affirmation did not preoccupy Israeli leaders until May 1967 when Syria, Jordan and Egypt rapidly started to concentrate large numbers of troops across the northern, eastern and southern borders of Israel. Moreover,

the Straits of Tiran near the Red Sea were blocked by Egyptian warships. A war in the Middle East was imminent.

This was the background to the Six Day War. What led to the Yom Kippur War?

From the Six Day War in 1967 onwards, the Egyptians and the Arab world were looking for an opportunity to retaliate. Egypt was especially eager to retaliate and regain its position of leadership in the Arab world. Israel, on the other hand, thought that after the 1967 war, Israel was in a position to establish peace in the Middle East....Israel is still waiting for the "telephone from the Arab leaders" to start the peace negotiations with her neighbors.

However, Israel was overconfident after the Six Day War, after the great victory, defeating the three armies of Egypt, Jordan and Syria. True, Israel did gain territory for much-needed strategic depth and thus gained a new feeling of national security. But political achievements were not executed as a continuation of the war. Israel was not able to secure any progressive achievement of longer term national goals.

Between 1967 and 1973, Egypt and Israel held peace negotiations with U.S. assistance. These indirect negotiations were for Egypt only an employment of tactics to show the world (and especially the U.S.) that Egypt was looking for peace and was flexible, while Israel was rigid and not

interested in pursuing peace.

Egyptian President Anwar Sadat knew the U.S. policy very well, and, consequently, he played the game very well. He knew that the U.S. would intervene under these three circumstances:

- A. To insure justice and punish the aggressor,
- B. To contain world communism,
- C. To be the world judge for democratic governments' equality of rights, of oppression of human rights. (14: 114-115)

The Egyptians, after the Six Day War in 1967, tried to gain position and build their political status. Egypt started an attrition war only a few months after they were badly defeated in the Six Day War until the ceasefire was set for September 1970. They realized that nothing had changed and that they were at the same stage the situation had been in for the past 20 years.

## THE SIX DAY WAR

### Preceding Events

(the following sequence extracted from 13: 76-77)

1967	15 May	Israeli Independence Day Parade; Egyptian troop movements through Cairo towards Sinai. Israel alerts forces.
	16 May	Egypt declares a state of emergency; All military forces are to be "...in a complete state of preparedness for war." All the country's armed forces had been alerted and were moving into defensive positions on the Israeli frontier.
	17 May	Statements from Cairo and Damascus claim that both the United Arab Republic (UAR) and Syria are in "combat readiness." Massive movement of Egyptian forces east across the Sinai. In Amman, an announcement is made that Jordanian forces are being mobilized.
	18 May	Radio Cairo continued to declare that Syrian and Egyptian troops are on maximum alert. Iraq and Kuwait announce their mobilization the same day, and in

Tel-Aviv it is stated that "appropriate measures" had been taken.

19 May The UNEF officially withdraws; in Gaza, the UN flag is hauled down and the force is relieved.

20 May Israel completes partial mobilization.

21 May Ahmed Shukairy announces that 8,000 men of the PLA had been placed under command of the UAR, Syria and Iraq; Egyptian reserves are called up.

22 May Mr. Eshkol states that in the past few days Egypt has increased her forces in Sinai from 35,000 to 80,000 men.

An announcement from Cairo reveals that Nasser had accepted an offer of Iraqi army and air force units to assist in the event of war.

23 May King Faisal of Saudi Arabia, who is in London, announces that he has ordered Saudi forces to be ready to participate in a battle against Israeli aggression.

24 May The U.S. Sixth Fleet (about 50 warships) is reported to have taken up positions in the eastern Mediterranean. In Amman, it is officially announced that general mobilization had been completed and that



the government had given permission for Iraqi and Saudi Arabian troops to enter Jordan; 20,000 Saudi troops are said to be standing by on the Saudi/Jordanian border in the Gulf of Aqaba.

- 26 May President Nasser says in Cairo that in the event of war Israel will be totally destroyed; the Arabs are ready and can win.
- 28 May General mobilization is proclaimed in the Sudan.
- 29 May Algiers announces that Algerian military units are being sent to the Middle East to help Egypt.
- 30 May Nasser and Hussein sign a mutual defense pact.
- 31 May Iraqi troops and armored units are reported to be moving into Jordan.
- 1 June Iraqi aircraft leave Habbaniyah Air Base near Baghdad for H-3, Iraq's westernmost air base not far from Israeli border.
- 3 June The Egyptian commander-in-chief, General Mortagi, issues an order of the day to his soldiers in the Sinai: "The results of this unique moment are of historic importance for our Arab nation and for

the Holy War through which you will restore the rights of the Arabs which have been stolen in Palestine and reconquer the stolen soil of Palestine...."

The same day, a fair portion of the Israel forces were sent on leave and were seen (by the foreign press and on television) sporting and relaxing on the beaches.

## NARRATIVE OF THE WAR

### The Preemptive Air-Strike

(following sequence extracted from 13: 78-92; 15: 72-74)

At 0745 on the morning of Monday, 5 June 1967, the first wave of the Israeli air-strike crossed the Egyptian border. It was directed against ten airfields of which nine were hit at precisely the same moment. The tenth, Fayid, was attacked a few minutes later, as it was still half covered by the morning mist over the Canal. The aircraft had been timed to take off at carefully measured intervals so that they should all arrive on target at the same moment and thereby achieve the maximum surprise. Each attack was made by four aircraft flying in pairs. Every aircraft reached its target, carried out its mission exactly as instructed, and every single bomb exploded. The ten airfields attacked in this strike were: El-Arish, Gebel-Libni, Bir-Gifgafa, Bir-Thamada, Abu-Sueir, Kabrit, Inchas, Cairo-West, Beni-Sueif and Fayid.

By far the greater part of the Egyptian Air Force was caught on the ground. The only Egyptian aircraft airborne at the time the Israeli strike went in was a training flight of four unarmed aircraft flown by an instructor and three trainees.

There were four reasons why the Israelis chose 0745 (Israeli time) as the time to attack, and they will be

discussed later under the preemptive strike section. The primary objectives of the first strike were to make the runways unusable and destroy as many MiG-21s as possible. The MiG-21s were the only Egyptian aircraft that could effectively prevent the Israeli Air Force's achieving its objective--the destruction of Egypt's long-range bomber force which posed such a threat to the civilian population of Israel. For 80 minutes without letup the Israeli Air Force pounded the Egyptian airfields. Then, after a 10 minute break, followed another 80 minutes of Israeli air-strike. In these two hours and 50 minutes, the Israelis destroyed the offensive potential of the Egyptian Air Force and effectively broke its back as a fighting force.

Altogether 19 Egyptian airfields were hit on the first day of the war, as well as the 10 mentioned previously Mansura, Helwan, El-Minya, Luxor, Almaza, Deversoir, Hurghada, Ras-Banas and Cairo International were also attacked that morning.

The Israeli Air Force estimates that in these 170 minutes it destroyed over 300 out of the 340 servicable Egyptian aircraft, including all 30 of the long-range TU-16 bombers. Eight formations of MiG-21s were destroyed as they were taxiing to the runways. Shortly before noon on that same Monday, the Syrian Air Force dropped bombs near the oil refinery in Haifa Bay and attacked the airfield of Megiddo, where they succeeded in destroying a few dummy aircraft.

The Israelis retaliated by attacking the Syrian Air Force base near Damascus. Following a Jordanian attack at noon on the Israeli air base at Kefar-Sirkin, where they destroyed a Noratlas transport aircraft on the ground, the Israeli Air Force bombed Mafraq and Amman airfields in Jordan, putting them out of action together with the Jordanian radar at Ajlun.

Before dusk on that first day of the war, Israelis paid further visits to most of the 23 airfields they had, struck earlier in the day. When the Iraqi Air Force next morning attacked the Israeli town of Natanya, the Israelis at once attacked Iraq's westernmost air base, H-3, near the Iraqi/Jordanian border. The intensity of the Israeli air offensive was evident by the fact that some planes flew as many as eight missions between quick stops to refuel and rearm and that the attack waves were spaced at 10 minute intervals.

The Lebanese, as a show of solidarity with the Arab cause, sent two Hawker Hunters into the northern part of Israel. One of them was shot down. Thereafter, the Lebanese gracefully withdrew from the war.

In a preliminary report on the number of planes downed in the first day's fighting, Brig Gen Mordechai Hod, commander of the Israeli Air Force, said in Tel-Aviv on the evening of 5 June that 387 Arab aircraft had been destroyed, 280 Egyptian MiGs on the ground and 20 in the air; 52

Syrian, 20 Jordanian and 15 Iraqi planes were destroyed.  
Hod said that 19 Israeli planes had been lost.

By nightfall on the second day of the war, the  
Israelis had destroyed 416 planes, 393 of them on the  
ground.

### The Sinai Campaign

(the following sequence extracted from 15: 74-86)

At 0815, 5 June 1967, 45 minutes after the launching of the Israeli air offensive, Israeli troops started their crushing ground offensive against the forces of the United Arab Republic in the Sinai Peninsula. Egyptian commanders, anticipating a main Israeli thrust down the coast of the Gulf of Aqaba toward Sharm El-Sheikh had deployed the bulk of their troops in the southern sector of the Sinai several days before the outbreak of the hostilities. The Israelis, therefore, decided to deliver their main blow at Egypt's weakest point, the northern Sinai coast.

The Israeli drive began with three principal thrusts, each supported by a division of about 15,000 men. The first column, led by Brig Gen Israel Tal, attacked with tanks at Khan Yunis, at the southern end of the Gaza Strip and from there headed west on the northern coastal road toward El-Arish, the UAR's main military base in the northern Sinai. The second Israeli column, under the command of Brig Gen Ariel Sharon, moved towards the heavily fortified Egyptian stronghold of Abu Ageila, about 25 miles of El-Arish. The third Israeli force, headed by Brig Gen Avraham Yoffe, penetrated Egyptian territory between the two other Israeli columns and came around the Egyptian forces under attack by Gen Tal's troops, preventing escape to the west.

The first UAR stronghold to come under attack was the Gaza Strip. Gen Tal's division launched an all-out assault against the city of Gaza on 6 June. Aided by an air-strike, the Israelis took control of the city by nightfall after bitter fighting.

Gen Sharon's forces encountered strong resistance in attacking Abu Ageila on 6 June. The Egyptian position was heavily defended by an infantry brigade, about 90 tanks and some regiments of artillery. After 20 hours of savage fighting, the Israelis finally captured Abu Ageila. It was vital to the Israeli advance to the west. Following the capture of El-Arish, the forces of Gen Tal split in two again. One Israeli column continued west to the eastern bank of the Suez Canal, about 30 miles south of the entrance from the Mediterranean. The other columns turned south to join Gen Yoffe's forces, which continued west to Bar Hasana. Meanwhile, another Israeli force to the south pushed out from the Negev, captured the Egyptian stronghold of Kuntila, just over the border, seized El Thamada further south and made its way to the strategic Mitla Pass, which dominated the access to the Suez Canal from the central Sinai.

By 7 June, the Israelis were ready for the final assault against the Egyptians. Israeli troops were at the Mitla Pass, Bar Hasana and Gifgafa. Thus, they were in control of the three routes to the Suez Canal. Israeli



forces had earlier (7 June) moved into Sharm El-Sheikh without firing a shot and had thereby lifted the blockade of the Gulf of Aqaba.

Some Israeli tanks reached the east bank of the Suez Canal by the early hours of 7 June. The main force of the Israeli armor and troops arrived there on 8 June, following a total Egyptian collapse that resulted from the final battle of the Sinai, fought at the Mitla, 30 miles from the Canal.

### Jordan-Jerusalem Campaign

(the following sequence extracted from 15: 86-89)

Fighting on the Jordanian front started at 1120 on 5 June as Israeli and Jordanian forces exchanged machinegun and mortar fire across the border dividing the city of Jerusalem.

Jordanian artillery then opened fire on Israeli positions from high points along the ridge that overlooked the Israeli-Jordanian border, and the battle spread quickly along the entire front. Jordanian troops in the Old City captured the UN headquarters building on a hill that dominated the city from the south. Israeli troops penetrated into Old Jerusalem and recaptured the UN headquarters later that day. Intensive shelling continued through the night and into 6 June as Israeli and Jordanian troops fought in Jerusalem, block by block and house by house. The northern Jordanian front collapsed on 6 June as Israeli forces closed in a pincer movement on Jenin and then captured the city, which was located on a vital road junction southwest of the Sea of Galilee. Driving to capture the entire West Bank of the Jordan River, Israeli troops pushed out from Jerusalem to take Ramallah, 25 miles to the north. The Israelis also captured Qalqilya, Latrun, Hebron and Bethlehem to the south of Jerusalem. The entire West Bank was secured by the Israelis on 7 June with the

capture of Nablus, north of Ramallah and Jericho to the southeast.

The battle for Jordanian Jerusalem entered its final phase on 7 June when an Israeli column broke through St Stephen's Gate at the western end of the Old City. The occupation of the Old City followed a night of intensive shelling and bombing of Jordanian positions. The Old City was officially surrendered on 7 June to the Israeli commander, Brig Gen Uzzi Narkiss, head of the central command. Despite the fierce fighting in Jerusalem, the Mosque of Omar and other Moslem and Christian shrines in the city were unscathed. Israeli forces were under strict orders to take every precaution not to inflict damage to the holy places.

As the fighting ended in Jerusalem on 7 June, Israeli soldiers made an emotional pilgrimage to the Wailing Wall, the most revered of the Jewish shrines.

### The Syrian Campaign

(the following sequence extracted from 15: 89-91)

Military activity on the Syrian front between 5 to 8 June was principally confined to the Syrian shelling of the Israeli border settlements north of the Sea of Galilee. The Syrians, enjoying the protection of strongly fortified positions on the Golan Heights overlooking Israeli territory, inflicted heavy damage on the settlements.

Heavy fighting between Israeli and Syrian forces began on 9 June, the day Syria announced its acceptance of the UN ceasefire order. Following an Israeli charge that Syria had violated the ceasefire by shelling 16 settlements on the border, Israeli troops and armored forces smashed deep into Syria. The Israeli column, attacking north of the Sea of Galilee, forced the Syrians to abandon bunkers and well-entrenched artillery and mortar positions near the border. The initial Israeli thrust thus shattered the Syrian defense line in the area that extended from Mount Hermon to the northern end of the Sea of Galilee. Many of the Syrian positions were stormed in hand-to-hand fighting. By the morning of 10 June, Israeli troops were in complete control of Syria's Golan Heights, overlooking the Israeli border.

After the capture of the Syrian Heights, the Israeli army set the stage for the final assault on 10 June with a powerful aerial attack on Syrian positions. The Israeli troops then plunged further into Syrian territory. But the fighting was halted by the day's end, as Syria and Israel agreed to comply with the UN Security Council's ceasefire call. (16)

## THE SIX DAY WAR--POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES

The political consequences of the war focused on two main points. First, the struggle between the Soviet Union and the United States for political and military power in the Middle East and, second, a solution for the Israeli-Arab conflict in the Middle East in terms of peace. With regard to the first point, the war determined a new foreign policy for each of the great powers. With regard to the second, the Arab's attitude towards Israel and the peace in the Middle East changed.

Israel's victory represented a massive defeat, not only for the Arab world but for the Soviet Union. For the past 20 years, the Russians had been trying to remove any French, British or American influence from the Middle East and replace it with their own. The Soviet Union invested colossal amounts economically and militarily throughout the entire area, including Algeria, Egypt, Syria, Jordan and Iraq. In terms of time and resources wasted and in terms of damage to Soviet interests, the Israeli victory represented a setback to the Soviet Union far graver than even the Cuban missile crisis. (13: 192)

The Six Day War and its sequel showed that the Russians had failed badly in their military and political assessments and assertions--not perhaps of the West, but of Israel and the Arab-Soviet prestige.

The reputation of Soviet arms and guidance, the value of Soviet friendship, the credibility of Soviet warnings, these had received a damaging blow with far-reaching consequences. After the Six Day War, the U.S. took the place of France as the main source of Israeli arms purchases. Throughout, the U.S. appeared to the world as Israel's friend, incurring considerable antagonism from the Arabs for not denying Israel the minimal means of self-defense. The U.S. decided to take a more active part in the Arab-Israeli conflict for one main reason, the Soviet Union. The American government was afraid of deeper Russian penetration into the Middle East. The Americans realized that slowly but surely the Russians were gaining more and more power in the Middle East, although the U.S. did not resist the Soviet penetration, not even on the diplomatic level. (16: 68)

After the war, the diplomatic relations between European countries and Israel changed. Many of them refused to support Israel's policy in relation to the Middle East conflict. The war brought a large wave of anti-Semitism which influenced some European governments.

The Arab political viewpoint also changed. Not all the Arab nations were willing to cooperate, but once negotiations started between Israel and one Arab government, the conviction would grow in all Arab capitals. The best solution for the Arabs, especially Egypt, Syria and Jordan

was recognizing Israel and beginning to negotiate. The Arab countries realized after the war that a peaceful relationship will benefit them both militarily and economically. (17: 362-364) The economic consequences of the war were of extreme importance; although the war lasted only six days, it involved millions of dollars. In addition, it also affected even those nations which had no participation in the war itself. The major problem Israel faced during and after the war was money. The war cost Israel more than 100 million dollars. Moreover, the tourist traffic during the summer decreased and caused a loss of more than 20 million dollars. The opening of the War of Attrition forced Israel to buy larger quantities of weapons from the U.S. (17: 362-364)

Although Israel spent a large amount of money, some of it was recovered after the war. The occupation of the Sinai Peninsula benefitted Israel economically. The oil production, which was running 150,000 barrels per day, was enough to make Israel self-sufficient in oil. Another economic advantage of the war was large numbers of tourists who came to visit Israel to see the Holy City of Jerusalem and other places occupied by Israel during the war. (17: 362-364)

After the Six Day War, oil was first used as a weapon by the Arab countries. The Arabs took advantage of their oil to exert economic and political pressure on



countries which did not support their foreign policy. Even today, oil is the most powerful weapon used by the Arabs.

## THE SIX DAY WAR MILITARY CONSEQUENCES

The ceasefire left Israel in possession of much of her enemies' territory--the Gaza Strip, Sharm El-Sheikh and the whole of the Sinai Peninsula up to the Suez Canal, the Old City of Jerusalem, the West Bank and, finally, the Golan Heights, which dominated the northern part of Israel and certain parts of the Holy Land which are of deep religious and historic significance to the Jewish people. Still, the value to Israel of the territories she had gained was primarily strategic. The towns along the border of Jordan's West Bank were used as bases by the Jordanians to shell Tel-Aviv and the seaside town of Natanya further to the north, as well as Lod International Airport and several of the Israeli air bases. The Latrun Enclave, jutting southwards into Israel and the high ground held by the Jordanians dominating the road from Tel-Aviv to Jerusalem could endanger access to the Israeli part of the Holy City. Most threatening of all, a large concentration of hostile forces on the West Bank could threaten to cut Israel in two at the point where her territory was no more than 10 miles wide.

"But perhaps the most vital to the security of Israel than even the Golan Heights or parts of Jordan's West Bank is the Sinai Peninsula. In the age of jet aircraft and possible surprise attacks, minutes can be vital, as the

Israelis themselves have proved. The Egyptian Air Force, from the Sinai base of El-Arish, used to be within seven minutes flying time from Tel-Aviv. Today from its Canal bases it is more than 20 minutes away." (13: 193-194)

Moreover, the occupation of the Peninsula was an important advantage for Israeli naval forces. Israel's coast line became longer, which made it easier for Israeli naval forces to operate in the Mediterranean. In addition, the occupation of the Peninsula strategically damaged the Egyptian naval forces. The separation of the Egyptian bases in the Red Sea and the Mediterranean worsened the operational conditions of the Egyptian navy.

It took a little time after the ceasefire for the world and the Arabs to realize that Israel had become the strongest power in the near Middle East. Israel had shown that she has the most effective air force and army with a population of 2.5 million up against the 40 million in the actively belligerent Arab nations. This was a staggering achievement. Moreover, Israel became a dominating factor in the Middle East (18: 28-29)

## THE YOM KIPPUR WAR: SUMMARY OF THE EVENTS

(the following sequence extracted from 1: 20-64)

1. The Syrian attack on the Golan Heights and the Egyptian attack on the Canal began at 1405 on 6 October 1973. The Egyptians and Syrians deployed heavy artillery and aircraft to attack military targets, including airfields in the Sinai. After a massive bombardment, the Egyptian and Syrian forces started a massive penetration of infantry and armor into Israeli territory. The Egyptians kept crossing the Canal while transferring large amounts of military equipment to the east.

2. Israel tried to deny the penetration of the two armies and started calling up the reserves. The Israeli Defense Force (IDF) is based on the reserves and relies on them for national defense. The standing national army is made up of a small number of regular troops. Thus, most of the armored forces of Israel were destroyed in the first 24 hours.

3. The Israeli Air Force (IAF) participated in repelling the attacking enemy forces. The IAF was forced to operate under less than ideal conditions. Before reaching air superiority, the air force was involved in keeping a "clean sky," attacking bridges on the Suez Canal. The IAF was the last wall to stop the enemy, even though it was having to operate inside the envelope of the SA-2, SA-3 and SA-6 missiles, thus suffering heavy casualties. Still, 42 enemy

aircraft, including attack aircraft, interceptors and helicopters (carrying commando units) were downed that day.

4. Only on the third day was Israel able to stabilize the front lines and stem the advance of the Syrian forces. Their advance was stemmed decisively and counterattacking action began to move them toward the "Purple Line" (the old border). This happened after the Syrians stopped their advance without any apparent good reason.

5. The IAF concentrated primarily on attacking targets on the east side of the Canal, as well as targets deep in Syria. The IAF also massively attacked enemy infantry and armored units on both fronts. On the second and third day, 104 enemy aircraft were downed in air battles and by anti-aircraft fire.

On the fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth days, on the Egyptian front, Israeli forces began a counter-attack. This counterattack was a complete, utter failure (8 Oct 73). Israeli forces continued their defensive battle. The Egyptians concentrated their efforts on the central sector of the Canal and tried to advance eastward. Their efforts failed after fierce battles. The Egyptians continued digging in on the east side of the Canal.

On the Syrian front, all of the Golan Heights were returned to our control, and our forces advanced into Syria, destroying Iraqi and Jordanian armor and infantry. During those days, the IAF attacked armored units, tanks and other

strategic targets--airfields, bridges on the Canal, anti-aircraft missile batteries and radar stations. Seventy-seven enemy aircraft were downed during those days.

6. The ninth day was the turning point. The Egyptians began a massive attack on all sectors. Those attacks were repelled by the Israeli southern command divisions, while destroying over 200 enemy tanks. This happened on 14 October, the first time the massive forces attacked outside the missile "umbrella." After breaking up the Egyptian attack, Israeli forces started a bridgehead at Duer-Sueir. Israeli forces penetrated between the Egyptian 2nd and 3rd Armies.

7. Until the ceasefire deadline set for 24 Oct at 1700 hours, Israeli forces continued their fast-moving advance and reached the northeast beach of the Gulf of Suez, Ras El-Ahadieh, completing the total envelopment of the Egyptian 3rd Army and the town of Suez.

During this advance, Israeli tanks destroyed missile batteries, and the IAF once again had air superiority and completed massive attacks on enemy bridges, armor, infantry forces, mobile artillery, most importantly providing close air support to Israeli forces.

8. On the Syrian front, Israeli forces captured the Syrian and Israeli Hermon. The Syrian formation was reinforced by a Jordanian armored division and an Iraqi mechanized division. A Syrian attack in the northern section of this sector was repelled and did not change the status quo.

9. The Syrians and the Egyptians lost 451 aircraft in this war. Israel lost, according to the press, 105 aircraft, almost all of them downed by missiles and AAA. Israel lost 2,222 soldiers, 5,590 wounded and 294 POW. (2: 7)

## THE OUTCOME OF THE YOM KIPPUR WAR

Emerging from the Yom Kippur War, Israel, even though she was not the one to attack first, found herself politically isolated--mainly from the European countries which were suffering from the oil embargo. Israel's self-confidence deteriorated, and she grew more and more sensitive to U.S. pressures. These pressures led to post-war treaties with Egypt and Syria that were not favorable to Israel. The loss of confidence in the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) caused an unprecedented investment in defense at the expense of the economy. The immediate objective was to delay an expected war until the IDF would regain its strength and the international situation would improve.

In the eyes of the Arabs, the Yom Kippur War broke the mythos of an "undefeated Israel." The disagreements between Jerusalem and Washington further impacted on weakening Israeli deterrence.

The IDF increased its tank force by 50 percent, self-propelled artillery by 100 percent, armored personnel carriers by 800 percent (as a lesson from the lack of success in employing combined armor and infantry tactics). The IAF also enlarged its arsenal of aircraft by some 30 percent. (2: 19)



The Arab countries, even though they were the first to attack and achieve tactical gains at the first phase of the war were not hurt politically. In fact, they emerged from the war politically stronger than they were at the beginning. Their political achievements were isolating Israel in the international community, increasing the disagreements between Israel and the U.S. (her strongest ally). The immediate result was the harnessing of the entire international community to the Arab cause of returning the territories lost in 1967, the score that this war initially set out to achieve.

From the military aspect, this war exposed the myth of the totality of the Israeli tank in the failure of the counteroffensive on the 8th of October 1973. This offensive brought to the surface all the malfunctions in the cooperation between the different army corps, as well as in the field of joint operations. Characterized by the lack of organization, this offensive represents other offensives in the Yom Kippur War. Excluding a few notable successes, such as the crossing of the Suez Canal, the majority of the offensives were unsuccessful.

And Where Was the Air Force?

This was a question felt and asked by the ground forces. The disappointment is only as big as the expectations, and expectations were based on the experience of the Six Day War. As it turned out, in the Yom Kippur War, it was a totally different opera. The disappointment of the ground forces and the blow for morale were great.

## THE ISRAELI STRATEGIC CONCEPT ON THE EVE OF

### THE YOM KIPPUR WAR

(the following sequence extracted from 3: 122-134)

The experience of the War of Independence in 1948 highlighted two important conclusions that later became the base of the strategic concept of Israel in her early years.

- 1) A doctrine of offensive battle based on maneuver and agility of forces. This enables achievement of tactical gains in a short time and further advancement by exploiting these gains.
- 2) Taking the war to the enemies' side. This principle was developed by Ben-Gurion (Israel's first Prime Minister). It is based on a rapid turnover from defensive posture in Israeli territory (utilizing the short lines of communication) to an offensive thrust into enemy territory. The counteroffensive should be a massive one, inflicting heavy losses on the enemy, thus bringing the war to a quick end.

The concept of "defense between the wars" had to comply with the constraint of a small population. It was therefore dictated that the main bulk of the ground battle order will be comprised of reserve units. The active duty army will maintain the infrastructure to train, maintain, mobilize and command the reserve units. The fighting elements of the Air Force and Navy will be based on long-term enlistment.

It was expected that in the event of an attack, the active duty units will deploy in a defensive manner to halt or delay enemy forces. At the same time, a rapid mobilization of the reserve forces will be initiated, and these will be deployed on the front according to plans previously made. The Air Force and Navy were to assist the active duty units in the defense and prevent the enemy from hindering the mobilization process.

Having achieved a complete mobilization and deployment of the reserves, and relying on the short lines of communication, the (IDF) will then take the initiative by embarking on a massive offensive, inflicting as much damage as possible on the enemy to bring the war to a quick end. In addition, it was stipulated that if it is evident that the enemy intends to attack, a preemptive strike will be delivered.

This, in essence, was the security concept of the 1950's and 1960's. A drawback in this concept is that it dealt mainly with operational aspects and neglected the wider strategic and political implications of the national security.

Indeed, the military objectives that were derived from this concept and defined before the Six Day War were focussed on a rigid linear defense line and subsequent annihilation of the opposing army. The Six Day War suffered

the lack of defined strategic and political objectives, resulting in the inability to translate the tremendous tactical achievements to any substantial strategic or political gains.

In the aftermath of the war, it became evident: The objective defined to the IDF (the annihilation of the Egyptian army in the Sinai) on the eve of the war had no strategic or political purpose. This inability to profit strategically or politically from the war was, in the longrun, one of the factors that motivated Egypt to plan and execute the Yom Kippur War in 1973.

Following the Six Day War, there was a dramatic change in strategic and geopolitical factors and a totally new political and military reality evolved. The new circumstances dictated the need to reexamine the Israeli security and adapt it accordingly.

The military ingredients that were derived from the initial concept and their successful employment led to a tactical superiority in the war (concentration of force, maneuverability and early warning). However, the military leadership in Israel failed to validate these ingredients against the changed environment which served as the base for their existence (short lines of communications turned into long ones, etc.) The time and logistics factors of mobilizing the reserves were not examined, neglecting the fact that the distance between the rear and the front had

more than doubled.

The concept of early warning was also left unattended after the war. It should have been realized that the Sinai ceased to be an early warning zone and that the Egyptians now had the ability to execute a surprise attack (even though the probability was low).

If these two aspects would have been thoroughly analyzed, it would have become obvious that for the lack of sufficient warning and the enemies' ability to initiate a surprise attack, a preemptive strike was an imperative to gain time.

In reality, the early warning concept was adhered to, thus failing to debate the need for a preemptive strike to the point where it was done too late, under pressure and was repelled by the political administration.

The political administration stayed with the military concept that identified security with maintaining the existence of Israel. It may be that the politicians were influenced by the impressive military success and preferred to preserve Israel as a status quo country, meaning her sole interest is in maintaining the present situation, including the territories taken in the Six Day War. The administration was not enthusiastic about the idea of conducting negotiations that could lead to the shrinking of the new borders recently acquired. Actually, the Israeli government ignored the signals from the superpowers who

expected translation of the military victory to a political one.

The military victory inevitably led to complacency. The prevalent notion was that the Arabs, being beaten so badly, will abandon war as a means to achieve their goals. The political thought process in Israel ground to a halt and with it the much needed corrections in the security concept. The euphoria of victory has done its damage. The result: a concept that was developed to give specific answers to specific conditions failed to change with these conditions, and the stage was set for the harrowing experience of 1973.

There were additional factors, aside from the military concept, that influenced the Six Day War, the lessons learned and their influence on the war of 1973.

These factors and their analysis are dealt with next.

## PARTICIPATION OF THE AIR FORCE

The participation of the Israeli Air Force in the Six Day War, obliterating the Air Forces of Egypt, Syria and Jordan in a few hours was certainly an impressive feat. The IAF controlled the Middle East skies and in cooperation with the ground forces managed to destroy numerous enemy forces on the ground.

What follows is a description of a battlefield air interdiction sortie flown by one of the writers of this work. At the time, he was a young lieutenant, five months after graduating from flying school:

"The mission was battlefield interdiction on the route stretching east from the Mitla Pass. My flight was comprised of four Ouragans (French-made fighter bombers), each armed with four rocket launchers, 19 rockets per launcher. Internal munitions was four 20 mm guns each. The leader of the flight was the squadron commander, and I was number two.

We took off at 0630 and climbed to medium altitude. Crossing the border south of the Gaza Strip, we could see the smoke columns rising from vehicles in the Sinai and the remains of Egyptian aircraft in El-Arish Air Base. The briefing instructed us to scan the East/West routes in the Sinai and to



attack Egyptian forces which were retreating hurriedly to the west. It was emphasized that we are to attack the vehicles closest to the Suez Canal, thus blocking the routes and stopping the convoys. We would then have time to deal with the rest.

We were flying at 15,000 feet, above the flak, and scanning the route. Two of us were to the north of the road and two to the south. The further west we flew, the more congested the retreating traffic became. Eventually, at a point about 10 miles east of the Mitla Pass, the vehicles were at a standstill, virtually bumper-to-bumper. We continued flying west one more minute and, following the leader's orders, we got ready to attack. Due to the abundance of targets, the leader instructed us to fire only three rockets each pass in order to destroy as many as possible.

Our attack lasted 25 minutes without any interference. After firing all our rockets, we continued strafing with our guns. By the time we left, the target area was strewn with burning and smoldering vehicles. One of our planes was hit by his own ricochet which was, in fact, the only danger over the target.

The execution of this mission gave me, as a young pilot, a feeling of self-confidence and was, in fact,

very similar to a training mission. During that day many more of these sorties were flown against this and other convoys in the Sinai. The gathering of tactical intelligence was being performed by the planes executing the attacks." (9)

The description of this mission is characteristic of many more flown by the IAF. It demonstrates how effective air power can become once air superiority is achieved. On a time axis, the Six Day War took place at the maximum gap between the aircraft and its opposition. The devastating results of the IAF's activity initiated a new momentum aimed at upgrading anti-aircraft systems on the Arab side immediately following the war.

After the war, the Arabs assessed the principles of the Israeli security concept. The principles, as they saw them, were these:

- 1) Achieve a total military and technological supremacy over the Arabs. This supremacy, they reasoned, is attained mainly by superior air and armored forces.

- 2) Every war against the Arabs must begin with a preemptive attack with Israel seizing the initiative. The war must be short because of the topographic and economical conditions which make it difficult for Israel to sustain long periods of fighting. (4: 30-31)

Building on this assessment, the Arabs readied themselves for the next war. As an answer to the Israeli

air supremacy they developed a ground-to-air defense system  
This was defined as follows:

"Israel has air supremacy in her air space.

On the other hand, an Egyptian array of surface-to-air missiles is capable of defending Egyptian ground forces attempting to cross the Suez Canal and up to a distance of 5-10 miles east of the Canal. It can also defend the Egyptian interior. This SAM array is a relatively stationary one and one that is not readily advanced to enlarge the defensive umbrella. Therefore, it has to be taken into account in deciding the offensive objectives." (4: 30-31)

Additionally, the Arabs stressed their ability to sustain longer periods of fighting compared to Israel. For them it meant that long periods of hostilities will erode the IAF to their advantage.

The way the IAF viewed the Arab assessment was described by the IAF commander in the Yom Kippur War:

- 1) The necessity for adequate surveillance systems to pick up incoming aircraft
- 2) The effectiveness of ground-to-air defenses, resulting in the most intense such system imaginable
- 3) The dispersal and hardening of aircraft sites. (8: 6)

The Yom Kippur War surprised Israel. This surprise stemmed, in part, from the great momentum on the part of the Arabs. The IAF was forced to operate under conditions prescribed by the Arabs. The IAF was immediately called to support the desperate ground forces in an attempt to stop the onslaught of the attacking enemy. Air-to-ground support missions flown in the beginning of the war were contrary to the doctrine that dictated "Air Superiority First." This resulted in unacceptably high losses the first few days.

The ground forces had high expectations from the air force, but these were not fulfilled. Similarly, the pilots had to cope with frustration and morale problems resulting from the hardships of operating in these heavily defended areas. As later described by one of them:

"Israeli pilots could avoid one missile and then a second or third, only to be hit by one more. While the SA-2, SA-3, SA-6 and SA-7 missiles complemented each other, and scored invisible hits by forcing aircraft to fly into each others' lethal zones, the missiles taken together had the effect of forcing Israeli aircraft to fly as low as possible, and so right into the lethal range of the many anti-aircraft guns attached to each ground formation." (7: 349-350)

The Arabs, throughout the war, adhered to the

doctrine of operating under the protective umbrella of the SAMs. Whenever and wherever they strayed from under the umbrella, they were attacked by the IAF and suffered heavy losses. The biggest success for the IAF, which was also the turning point of the war on the southern front, was on the 14th of October. That day, the Egyptians tried to launch an attack to the east. They outran their air defense cover and were viciously attacked from the air. As testified by Gen Shazeli, Egyptian chief of staff: "The attempted offensive to the east was the first major mistake by the Egyptian leadership, and caused in its wake many more." (4: 54)

Following the turning point, the Israeli plan for crossing the Canal to the west was formulated. The ability of the IAF to assist the ground forces was also researched. The commander of the Air Force pressed for an immediate crossing in order to throw the Egyptians off balance and reach a position of threat on Cairo. As put in his own words: "On that day the IAF had 380 operational planes. I argued that with a loss rate of 6 to 8 planes a day we were headed for trouble. I said that we must break the balance that has been formed and that we have enough power at this point to operate in the north while at the same time enhance the effort of crossing the Canal." (3: 109)

This point clearly displays the lesson that the Egyptians had learned from the Six Day War. A protracted war serves the Egyptian interest and adversely affects the

IDF and IAF.

As a conclusion to the activity of the IAF in the Yom Kippur War, it is apparent that the Arabs had successfully applied the lessons of the Six Day War. They conducted their ground operations in the perimeter of their air defense systems and exhausted the IAF in a long and tiresome war. In the political field, they managed to create a situation which prevented the Israeli government from permitting a preemptive strike.

IAF activity can be summarized in four categories:

- Political: It was denied the permission to deliver a preemptive strike which would have given it a much needed advantage in the struggle for air superiority.
- Strategic: It was forced to support the land battle before it had control of the sky.
- Operative: It was repeatedly diverted from one front to another, sometimes without coordination with the ground forces.
- Tactical: The IAF encountered difficulties providing air-to-ground support in missile-infested areas. It was surprised by the intensity of enemy air defenses and suffered from the lack of sufficient tactical reconnaissance.

## THE GROUND FORCES

In the Six Day War, the Israeli ground forces demonstrated their extraordinary maneuver capability. Three divisions thrust into the Sinai on three major routes, subduing the Egyptian Army and arriving at the water's edge of the Canal in only four days. Having crossed the border, the Israeli forces met with the resistance of frontline Egyptian strongholds controlling the only routes. In a few places, the Egyptians put up a stubborn fight from which battles, resembling modern land battles evolved.

One of the outstanding battles was fought by Gen Sharon's division in the Abu Ageila region. This was a true tactical battle in which armor, infantry, helicopter-transported troops and artillery were employed in coordination on a very wide scale. The heavily fortified Egyptian positions at Abu Ageila and Um Katef were taken in a concentrated night attack. (These strongholds stalled the IDF for three days in the Sinai Campaign of 1956.) Other battles fought in the Sinai did not demand such professional tactical ability, and, thus, the objectives set for the three divisions were achieved in full. (3: 88)

In the Six Day War, the Israeli armored forces applied the doctrine of the "armored fist," was based on the "totality of the tank." Armor was employed in an offensive manner resembling the WW II German "Blitzkrieg." This was in

essence technotactical tank warfare fought in small units rather than divisions. It leaned on the exceptional maneuverability and firepower of the tank.

A defensive form of battle and the necessity to employ tanks and infantry in cooperation were barely known at the time and therefore rarely used (the exception is the battle of Abu Ageila). At war's end, the impressive achievement of the Israeli ground forces was evident. They had dealt the armies of Egypt, Syria, Jordan and Iraq a fatal blow.

In the wake of the war, the Egyptians, in an intensive effort, commenced to assess the results and debrief their moves with the help of the Soviet Union. On the 20th of June (a week after the war), the President of the Soviet Union arrived in Egypt, accompanied by his Minister of Foreign Affairs and his Chief of Staff. They declared that they have come not only to talk but also to back their talking with deeds. The Egyptian request from the Soviets was for advisors and trainers to be stationed in all corps to debrief the results of the war.

The Soviets were more than happy to comply with these requests, and their advisors were to be found down to the lowest levels of the military. The Soviets also promised to supply all the equipment needed for the Egyptian army to rebuild itself. (2: 66)



Loyal to their assessment that the Israeli concept relies on the superiority of the armed forces, as well as the striving to keep the war short, the Egyptians defined their goals and specified the different topics to focus on from a strategic viewpoint: 1) on the ground, the Egyptians will have an initial quantitative advantage and a total superiority in artillery and antitank capability; 2) in favor of the Egyptians are shorter lines of communications compared to the Israeli's. (4: 31)

At the end of this debriefing process, the Egyptians arrived at the conclusion of how to prepare for the next war:

"Start the war in a surprise so as not to cope with a reserve-reinforced IDF during the crossing of the Canal. Split the force of the IDF on the strategic level (by attacking simultaneously on two fronts) and on the tactical level (by attacking on a wide front). Neutralize the Israeli armor's advantage by seizing stronghold's with antitank equipped infantry and by evading a frontal confrontation. Finally, prolong the war as much as possible to exhaust Israel." (4: 33-34)

The Israeli lessons from the war were based mainly on the success of the tank battles. These usually encountered weak resistance in part because of the low standard of the Egyptian Army and in part because of the

fact that the IAF was operating freely and attacking Egyptian forces even before they went into battle. One of the main conclusions pointed to the centrality of the tank on the battlefield, a notion later strengthened to become the "exclusivity of the tank." It was this perception that led to neglecting the development of infantry and paratroop forces. General Mordechai Gur, a division commander in the Six Day War, commented on this:

"To this misconception of the formation of the fighting force and the correct relations between its components, armor, infantry, artillery and combat engineering, was added the constraint of the budget. And, indeed, when the IDF was required to decide on the subject, it prioritized the tank in quality and quantity at the expense of the other elements...less mechanized infantry that could keep up with the tanks and less dedicated artillery. The imbalance that evolved was carried over into the Yom Kippur War." (10: 6)

German General Guderian, Father of the Blitzkrieg, wrote of the armor/infantry cooperation doctrine:

- 1) The tanks and the infantry operate at the same time. The mission dedicated to the infantry is to take care of enemy positions which might contain antitank munitions.
- 2) The infantry advances in front of the tanks...the infantry will be supported by other elements such

as artillery and combat engineering. (6: 29)

The battle for the "Jiradi" demonstrates that the IDF did not adhere to this doctrine:

"Even in 1967 when there was a catastrophic collapse induce by the shock of surprise, Egyptian troops sometimes fought tenaciously as at the Jiradi defenses in front of El-Arish." (7: 357)

Another testimony is found in an Israeli book:

"The battle fought by Tal's division in the Jiradi emphasizes the doctrinal error based on the erroneous concept of the 'totality of the tank.' The first tank brigade, rapidly advancing, punched through the Egyptian defense lines but did not stop to clean out the defending infantry. The surprised Egyptians at first abandoned their positions. But, having recovered, they returned and assumed these same positions only to force the second tank brigade to fight its way through with a price of ten tanks. Only after the arrival of the Israeli armed infantry were these positions flushed out and the route opened." (3: 89)

The Egyptian offensive of the Yom Kippur War opened with massive artillery barrages on Israeli fortifications. Following close behind, the Egyptian infantry established beachheads in key positions on the East Bank of the Canal. The Israeli armor, which, according to the concept was supposed to advance and take forward positions, was

countered by the Egyptian infantry. These were equipped with antitank munitions and managed to stop the armor. The tanks could not make it to the front line of fortifications and Phase A of the Israeli concept crumpled. The Egyptians now had time to solidify their beachhead and started pouring into the Sinai.

The Israeli attempted counterattacks (7-9 October) rammed into the impenetrable combination of surface-to-air missiles and infantry-carried antitank systems. The concept of the invincibility of the "armored fist" was the next to be proven a faulty one. This concept called for the tanks to head the attack in a frontal advance and thus topple the enemy defenses. What worked wonders for the IDF in the Six Day War against a weak and unprepared enemy was found inadequate against the new, modern opposition. Not only did this frontal attack fail to topple the enemy, the horrendous losses and casualties were depleting the IDF of its armored reserves. The "Totality of the Tank," a concept unjustly forged in the Six Day War, was shattered forever.

Egyptian doctrine of the Yom Kippur War, stemming from their experiences six years before, proved itself on the battlefield. As put by the Egyptian chief of staff:

- 1) The modern battle is a joint one. Israel dependence on the armor resulted in numerous failures.
- 2) Antitank missiles...play a key role in...future... will not completely cancel...the tank. (3: 78)

The Yom Kippur War revealed the hard way how destructive the structural implications of the "totality of the tank" concept were. It was clearly demonstrated how the imbalance of force structure affected the results on the battlefield. The shortage of infantry and artillery was painfully felt. Beyond doubt it was proven that the "armored fist" is no substitute to a modern land battle doctrine based on balanced development and coordinated employment of forces.

### PREEMPTIVE STRIKE

At 0745 on Monday, 5 June 1967, the first wave of the Israeli air-strike went in. At 0815 Israel started her crushing ground offensive against the forces of Egypt in the Sinai Peninsula. (15: 78)

On 6 October 1973 at 1405, the Yom Kippur War broke out between Israel and her two neighbors, Egypt and Syria.

Presenting the outset of these two wars with a focus on the time is aimed at stressing the importance of surprise and initiative in the opening of hostilities. In other words, the meaning of surprise and initiative is who attacked first.

It is from this point of view, the first to attack or initiate a surprise attack, that an analysis of the meaning and results of actions in battle will be sought.

Surprise attack is not a rare phenomenon in the history of wars. Its principle lies in the attempt to affect fast strategic gains by throwing the enemy off balance at the outset of hostilities.

In WW II each of the big powers had its share of surprise: The British were surprised by the German invasion of Norway and from the Japanese attack on Singapore. The French were surprised by the German invasion of their own country. The Russians never expected the Barbarossa operation. The Americans were caught offguard at Pearl

Harbor and, finally, the Germans were not ready for the Allied landing in Normandy.

On 10 May 1940, Hitler initiated a full-scale surprise on Western Europe. This campaign expanded WW II and paved the way for the expansion of Nazism. The rapid movement of the German Blitzkrieg was a surprise factor that overwhelmed the defending countries.

The Luftwaffe aimed its efforts at neutralizing the Allied air forces on the ground. Approximately 400 German bombers attacked 72 Allied air bases in approximately 1,000 sorties. In Holland, 18 planes remained operational out of 670! The surprise attack toppled the morale of the Belgian and Dutch armies. Germany later enjoyed substantial advantages from this surprise attack. (12: 39-45)

The Six Day War opened after a fortnight of extreme tension on the Egyptian border. Forces were concentrated on both sides of the border, and each passing day increased the tension and drew the war closer. Israel viewed the declarations of the Egyptian and Syrian leaders, the closing of the Straits of Tiran and the mobilization of the Egyptian forces to the border as an act of war.

On the eve of the war there was a strong feeling of insecurity in Israel, as well as heavy doubt whether Israel could face the Arab world in the coming war. General Beni Peled (an IAF wing commander at the time--now reserve) brings to life the feeling of insecurity felt in the

political and military levels regarding Israel's ability to defend her existence with this striking recollection:

"The principal military rabbi came to my wing that day, stepped up on the stage and told the soldiers and pilots:... 'Don't be sad. Even if we lose there is no need to lose faith. Israel's eternity will not subdue and the Jewish people will prevail because there are five million Jews in America, two million in Western Europe and three million in Russia.' I removed him from the stage and told him, 'You will never set foot in my wing again.'" (3: 80)

Out of strategic and economic considerations (the inability of Israel's economy to sustain such punishment for a long time), the Israeli government decided to attack Egypt on the 5th of June 1967. The attack was based on a massive air-strike in a short time, followed by an assault of ground forces into the Sinai.

Several calculations dictated the time chosen for the aerial strike to be 0745 Israeli time (0845 Egyptian).  
1) The Egyptian state of alert was past its peak. Expecting an attack in the early morning, the Egyptians kept several sections of MiG-21s in aerial patrol, starting at dawn. In addition to these, there were flights of MiGs on five minute alert on the ground. By 0730 (Israeli time) the Egyptians would lower their state of alert, land their patrols and switch off some of their radars. As it turned



out, most of the Egyptian pilots were "having breakfast" at the time of the attack. (13: 78)

2) The relatively late morning attack allowed the Israeli pilots a good night's sleep before the start of the war. Planning the attack at dawn would have allowed no sleep. This would have resulted in a situation in which by the evening of the first day, the pilots would have had no sleep for 36 hours with a whole night still ahead of them. (13: 79)

3) The morning mist, a regular phenomenon in the Nile Delta and Suez Canal at this time of year lifts at 0730. By 0800 the conditions are optimal for aerial attack. Visibility is perfect due to the dispersion of the mist and the angle of the sun, and the air still allows accurate delivery of ordnance. (13: 79)

4) Egyptian office hours start at 0900 (Egyptian time). Striking 15 minutes before that time caught most of the Egyptian generals and Air Force commanders on their way to work and the command posts manned with junior officers.

The preemptive aerial attack was highly successful and greatly exceeded the expectations of such a surprise attack. The Egyptian Air Force was almost totally destroyed, affording the Israeli Air Force the freedom of operation on the Southern Front. Moreover, it enabled the execution of a deterring attack against Syria on the Northern Front.

The outcome of the aerial attack had implications on the ground campaign in the sense that only one side enjoyed aerial support.

The advantages of a preemptive strike learned in history were accentuated in the Six Day War. Exploiting the Air Force's success brought about the success of ground forces. The Egyptian Army suffered a blow to its morale, was forced to operate without air cover and was constantly surprised by the IDF's rapid movement on the ground. The Six Day War is probably the most impressive demonstration of the benefits of attacking first.

In the authors' opinion, this was the single most important factor to victory.

Egypt thoroughly debriefed this aspect of the war and arrived at the conclusion that it was indeed the principle of attack first that tilted the scales.

In a situation assessment performed by the Egyptians before the Yom Kippur War dealing with the security concept of Israel they wrote: "Every war against the Arabs must begin with an Israeli preemptive attack. The initiative must remain with the Israelis. The war must be short because of the topographic, demographic and economical conditions which make it impossible for Israel to sustain a long one. (4: 30)

Armed with this situation assessment, Sadat began

the preparations to the Yom Kippur War. His leading principle was "attack first."

The war being planned was viewed by Sadat as the absolute opposite of all the previous wars with regard to the Arab's concept of operation and the expected Israeli response. The Egyptians claimed that this was the first time the Arabs have grabbed the reins of initiative, in all previous campaigns acting in an unplanned manner and in response to Israeli actions. (11: 17)

Following the Israeli example, the Arab countries too had several calculations for picking the exact time to attack in the Yom Kippur War. The main reason was to act on the day most sacred to the Jews (Yom Kippur--the Day of Atonement) and in the hour most likely to find the fewest forces on the front and the majority of Israelis in the synagogues. That calculation also relied on the fact that most communications were shut down due to the holiday and mobilization of reserve forces would thus be delayed.

The late realization of the impending attack demanded a preemptive strike by the Israeli Air Force in order to disrupt the combined attack of Egypt and Syria. But the political administration, out of political and other considerations, abandoned the expected gains of a preemptive strike and elected to wait for the Arab offensive and then respond. Another calculation in withholding the preemptive strike was the belief in Israel's ability to counter an Arab

attack by the Israeli Air Force and by a fast reserve mobilization. The fact that time and space factors had changed was not properly considered. The once short lines of communications were now much longer, resulting in a critical time factor. Israel believed that by waiting for the Arabs to strike first she would be labeled the "victim" and strengthen her global political standing. As opposed to the feeling of insecurity felt on the eve of the Six Day War, there was a feeling of oversecurity on the eve of the Yom Kippur War.

The principle of "attack first" that worked so well for Israel in 1967 now worked against her just as well. The Egyptian and Syrian armies gained impressive successes from their combined surprise attack on the two fronts.

Luck had it that the Arabs, not expecting such an easy advance for their offensive, stalled, and in so doing they failed to exploit the opportunity given to them. The Arab advance on both fronts had a severe influence on the organizing of the IDF, but their eventual stalling afforded Israel the valuable time needed. The outcome of the Yom Kippur War would have certainly been different had the Arabs better exploited their initial advantage and continued to advance.

The Six Day War went down in history as a success story of surprise attack and rapid victory. The Yom Kippur War opened with a surprise attack on two fronts, and the

initial gains were dramatic. The IDF, fighting fiercely and suffering tremendous casualties, was able to close the gap and thus negate the advantage of the "first strike."

In conclusion, one might say that the principle of attack first or, in other words, surprise attack, has taken a central and important place in these two wars and in the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

## CONCLUSION

"Of what happened in the past we know nearly everything, yet not everything do we understand. Of what the future holds for us we know nothing. How are we then to understand what has yet to happen?" (Proverb--He who has experienced prophecy.) (2: 29)

In the Six Day War, the IDF came out victorious over the combined Arab armies by delivering a preemptive strike with outstanding military success. In this war, Israel stood alone without the support of any superpower and yet achieved this impressive victory in a mere six days.

The Arabs, having suffered their third defeat (having lost the War of Independence and the Sinai Campaign), embarked on a massive effort to figure out what went wrong in this and previous encounters. They took a long look at the land and air battles, as well as the effects of the preemptive strike. The Soviets were active participants in this "post-hostilities analytical process".

The Arabs identified the areas in which the IDF had the advantage and did their best to evade them in planning their objectives for the Yom Kippur War. The Egyptians felt a deep frustration concerning the issue of preemptive strike. In the Six Day War, as in previous wars, the initiative was always with Israel, and they (the Egyptians) were always forced to act in response.

In analyzing the political situation at the outset of the Six Day War, it was learned that Israel did not have to pay a high political price for deciding to preempt. For fear of an intolerable political price due to a different political situation, the Israeli government decided not to attack in Yom Kippur, and the military consequences were grave.

That attacking first and attaining the initiative is advantageous was a lesson learned and applied successfully by the Arabs. Recognizing the elements of the Israeli victory to be the superiority of the tank and aircraft over their own, they were wise to pose a formidable air defense system and equip their infantry with antitank weaponry.

Israel, complacent after her Six Day War victory, did not probe deep into the elements of success. The shadow of victory was obscuring the changes taking place across the border, depriving them of their deserved attention.

The Arabs have proven what has been proved time and again. The only benefit of a military defeat is the lessons learned from it.

As in history, this essay has posed the question time and again: Is it not possible to learn from the failures of others? The Six Day War, put down in history as a tremendous success story, contrasts with the defeats and disappointments of the Yom Kippur War and together, indeed, enhances the necessity to learn from the faults of others.

The Six Day War and the Yom Kippur War are no exceptions to history. The party most badly burnt is the one to better extract and apply the lessons.

It is imperative that this fact be recognized. In doing so, one betters the chances of a thorough debrief of victorious moves, paving the road for more to come.



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